

Resolution in Support of Great Lakes Small Harbors Coalition

The Heart of the Lakes Center for Conservation Policy (HOL), which represents the interests of 28 member land conservancies throughout the State of Michigan, recognizes that our state's 50+ small harbors provide vital access to recreation and are very significant economic drivers in coastal communities throughout the state. At the same time these small harbors serve as ports of refuge, rescue stations, and ferry terminals, among a host of other services provided to our citizens.

HOL recognizes that maintaining boater access to these harbors has long been a federal government responsibility, and that historically low water levels coupled with the failure of the federal authorities to allocate sufficient funding for harbor maintenance and improvements on the Great Lakes has created a dangerous situation at small harbors throughout Michigan.

Therefore be it Resolved that the board of Heart of the Lakes Center for Conservation Policy supports the Great Lakes Small Harbors Coalition in its efforts to advocate for more equitable and sustainable funding, based primarily on efforts to restore the federal commitment to maintaining harbors in Michigan, and throughout the Great Lakes Basin.

Approved by Heart of the Lakes Board of Directors: 2-20-13

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Letter: Don't touch Natural Resources Trust Fund

The Detroit News' Feb. 10 editorial, "Free the Natural Resources Trust Fund," appropriately cited the importance of funding to maintain Great Lakes harbors.

I chair the Arcadia Township Planning Commission in Manistee County. There are few issues of greater significance than safe, open passage to Lake Michigan from Arcadia Lake, a designated harbor of refuge with a state-supported municipal marina.

However, I encourage staying clear of the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund that was created and supported by Michigan voters as a constitutional mandate. At a time when Michigan's economy is retooling and our focus is upon making our communities places that people want to live, the mandate for the trust fund is stronger than ever.

Just as Arcadia Township is dependent upon our connecting waterway from Arcadia Lake to Lake Michigan, so too have we crafted a community-backed plan to leverage our immense natural resources to support our economic well-being.

That plan calls for the development of opportunities for people of all ages, needs and abilities to make our community a destination to enjoy our Lake Michigan shore.

Just as the trust fund has been used to acquire some of these assets for public benefit, we are counting on the trust fund to support their appropriate development for public use and enjoyment.

Your editorial ignores the historic importance of the trust fund to the economic well-being and quality of life of hundreds of communities throughout Michigan.

With this in mind, we reject your premise that the trust fund should be constitutionally altered to be at the discretion of policy makers.

To do that would be a backward step for our state and all who believe that the riches of our state — reflected in Pure Michigan — hold the real key to our long-term prosperity.

Brad Hopwood, Arcadia